WHAT AMUSED ALAN DALE MOST

THE "first nighters" of the past week—and by "first nighters" I mean those generally ranged in the category of "among those present were"—looked a trifle uncertain. They were not quite sure that the season was really beginning. There are such things as preliminary seasons, you know, which are neither flesh, fish nor fowl, and people seemed to suspect that last Monday ushered in one of these. The ladies wore undecided clothes, and the men, when they descended to evening dress, supplemented it with the frolicsome but inauspicious straw hat. Everybody appeared anxious to betray a tanned and mountainous aspect; one or two were undeniably ashamed to be seen in New York before the mid-September epoch. First-night audiences reek with humbug. They are quaint assemblages. You get to know every face in an auditorium. You feel you could almost tell what each man has had for dinner. I believe that if I entered a theatre at, say, 10 o'clock on the first night of a new production, I could, from the attitude of the audience, describe its reception—not that the attitude of a first-night audience has any very pronounced effect upon a play's future. To the outsider, however, these gatherings are interesting. Upon the initiated, they pall. Sometimes I wish that I could take third or fourth nights, and escape the know-it-alls, the callow, smiling boys, with ready-made, reach-me-down opinions, and the women who speak of all the members of the cast by their Christian names.

This is no preliminary season. We are in medias res with a vengeance. Two favorite star-men, an author-actor-manager, and a new aspirant for comic opera supremacy are with us in good earnest. There will be no neglige costumes during the coming week, and straw hats will be consigned to shelves. The season is real; the season is earnest; a preliminary dalliance is not its goal.

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I said "Phew!" after the first performance of "Rosemary" Monday night. "Phew!" is an onomatopoetic sigh of relief. The new play at the Empire is a big "go," and I am vindicated. I should have felt so guilty if it had failed. Really, I don't believe that I should ever have held up my head again. Picture me, withering and drooping, and refusing food if "Rosemary" had fiascoed. Mr. Frohman, who had spent dollars galore on the production, looked cool and collected. Failure doesn't trouble the experienced manager. I felt that the success of this play was a question of reputation with me. I had gushed over it, in advance. I adored it when I saw it in London. And yet a London success is not invariably a New York success. I've met men who have raved over a play abroad, and have voted it dull, even when just as well acted, after transplantation. Atmosphere has something to do with it. A fellow doesn't always go around with an infallible judgment, covering two worlds, in his waistcoat pocket. The success of a play often depends upon climate.

"Rosemary," however, has triumphed. On Tuesday night I was absurd enough to rush around and ask about the "house" at the Empire. No, I didn't ask the business manager, or the gate keeper, or any of the ushers. I went to the unprejudiced and impartial. "Sold out," was the verdict. I said "Phew!" again. (By-the-bye, I wish I could find some more sigh of relief than "Phew?" It sounds like the agonized cry drawn from a sudden encounter with an unholy odor.)

It was Maud Adams who endeared "Rosemary" to New Yorkers. Miss Adams is probably the sweetest little actress in the English speaking world. I've never seen anybody like her. Let the enemies of the stage get one good look at this daintiest of little ladies and conversion will stare them in the face. If Miss Adams were not such an admirable actress, you would say that she was a pretty, silly little thing. That is what you say of Katharine Florence at Hoyt's. Miss Adams is an artist, however, and to realize that fact you must hear Dorothy Cruickshank read her diary to Sir Jasper Thorndyke. This is art, real art. Miss Mary Moore at the London Criterion never at any time approached the charm of Maud Adams. I believe that if Wyndham saw the performance at the Empire, Miss Moore would get what is popularly called as "the sack." "Rosemary" is all Maud Adams. She gives us not only rosemary for remembrance, but pansies for thought, and her chaste little Maltese kitten face is a perpetual pleasure.

"I'm sorry that I can't congratulate John Drew. Mr. Drew was a bitter disappointment. After having seen him in the emotional role of "The Bauble Shop," I expected better things. In the third act he indulged in the cheap device of ranting, with features all distorted, and attitudes awry and amateurish. The whole essence of the role of Sir Jasper Thorndyke is expression, and Charles Wyndham showed us an admirable study of that quality. John Drew behaved like a stripling of three and twenty in the throes of a first passion, and as Sir Jasper, by his own confession, had already loved and lost this violence at the mature age of forty was quite incomprehensible. In his comedy moments he was happier, because he was John Drew, the touch-and-go comedian, the versatile quip giver.

I was amused at the silence that followed Mr. Drew's initial entrance. Nobody knew him. His mustache was gone. In the semi-darkness of the stage people wondered who was the man with the face that looked as though it had been boiled? The comedian was visibly disconcerted. He wanted to bow for a moment or so, and with uplifted hand stay the wild outburst of glad greeting. This, by reason of his lack of hirsute decoration, was denied him. Of course, Drew will improve. People will go to see him again and again. He could scarcely be expected to step from "Christopher, Jr.," into the shoes of Sir Jasper Thorndyke without a few misgivings.

Miss Ethel Barrymore, a rather comely girl, with the features of Georgie Drew, Uncle John and grandmamma, was signally successful as Priscilla, and she dressed the part charmingly. In London Miss Annie Hughes looked a fright, although she was pictorially more accurate than Miss Barrymore. The audience took the young woman to their hearts at once. They knew Miss Barrymore's pedigree, which is bounded on all its cardinal points by the footlights.

Arthur Byron vexed me. He was out of the picture. He appeared to be giving us an imitation of Fritz Williams in that young comedian's most usual moments. He lacked the simplicity and sincerity that Kenneth Douglas gave the part in London. Miss Annie Adams also ruined a good part, which she neither looked nor understood. Daniel Harkins was a satisfactory professor, and Harry Harwood, when he tones himself down, will be excellent. Joseph Humphreys gave a most creditable performance, although—as I said last Tuesday—I can't quite place his accent.

* * *

What a neat little actor is E. H. Sothern! He has no rough edges, nothing that is frayed or out of order. When I saw him in "An Enemy to the King," at the Lyceum Tuesday night, I said to myself: "Here we have an actor at last who has mastered the difficult problem of repose." Repose is tidiness. It is a most delectable characteristic. Its effect on an audience is as good as a bromide. The amateur believes that it is the simplest thing in the world to acquire. In reality it is a bridge that few actors are able to cross. It leads to greatness. Crane has it; Nat Goodwin has just succeeded in partially spearing it. Young Sothern has absolutely secured it, and he deserves all the praise that has been lavished upon him of late. How raw he used to be! How over-weeningly self-satisfied! How great is the metamorphosis! Isn't it odd that as soon as a fellow begins to amount to anything, his self-satisfaction disappears! Show me a man, in any walk of life, who is pleased with himself, and I'll point you out a gigantic failure. The worst actors are the complacent ones. Young Sothern feels his limitations, realizes his weaknesses, and—behold, he is a success!

"An Enemy to the King" is a play that just at present must be set down as creditable to its author, R. N. Stephens. It is virile, creeping along in the shadow of "The Prisoner of Zenda." Mr. Stephens had a good story to tell, but didn't know how to tell it. His object appeared to be to get his denouement into the fourth act, and to pad out the preceding acts until that was reached. His characters talked a great deal and did a multitude of stupid things. Nothing sillier and flatter than the comedy rescue episode in the second act could have been introduced. It ruined a capital climax, and it will have to be chipped out or dished up very differently.

Still, I think that "An Enemy to the King" will succeed. We are hungry for romance when we have such a richly romantic actor as young Sothern to interpret it. Mr. Stephen's play is wholesome without being porridge, and it can easily be shaped into graceful outlines. The plot is the essential thing. Mr. Stephens has piled on the coloring matter with a too lavish hand. It was a pardonable mistake, but it must be rectified at once. A little less of King Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots, if you please, and a little more of Ernanton de Launay, the Huguenot captain. We like 1585 very much indeed, but, of course, we prefer 1896. Mr. Stephens can't blame us for this. Our preference merely means that we clamor for his love story rather than for his history.

Miss Harned, who last season was crying "Milk below," made much of the part of Julie. She is a trifle pompous, and there is really no reason, other than that of sloveliness, why she should look so mature. She is an actress of distinction, with a certain magnetism of presence that serves her in good stead, but she is careless. She has been too much petted by the theatregoers of this metropolis. She feels that she can do as she likes. I can't believe that Grace Kimball would have sported the pink pearl dress that Miss Harned wore at the ruined chateau of Maury, when she was desperate and heart-torn. When will actresses learn that ladies in distress are not expected to frivol in front of their looking glasses? Who can sympathize with mental agony when physical attributes are decked out "regardless." There should be a closer connection on the stage between costume and mood than there is in real life. No, I don't believe in betrayed ladies invariably donning black gowns, but it does seem to me that a heroine who is struggling to save the lives of her father and her lover might select some more fitting gown than a startling and unbecoming confection of pink and pearls. Excessive embellishment is the curse of the American stage. It is good for dressmakers, and for nobody else.

Mr. Sothern's company is a competent one, although some of its members scarcely suggest their Huguenot surroundings. Nothing more scenically admirable has been seen on the Lyceum's stage.

* * *

We are born in lies, and we grow up surrounded by lies, according to a well-known cynic. We lie in our parlors, and we lie in our walks abroad; we lie in the churches, we lie at the polls, we lie in our marriage promises, and we lie in our exchanges. At least Nordau says that we do it, and he is a professional pessimist. Perhaps he is correct, and that by reason of all this we can't find amusement in a farce that is built around three liars. At any rate, the play at Hoyt's Theatre strikes me as being particularly flat and doleful.

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AT THE THEATRES LAST WEEK.

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Fritz Williams plays the leading role in "The Liar." He was funny only in his boxing match with Philippe, but I must hasten to add that Francis Neilson, who played Philippe, was even funnier. Mr. Neilson acted this small part very effectively indeed. Miss Katharine Florence is sinking into a slough of pretty nothingness. She is charming to look at, and she ends there. I know that it is hard to invest an ingenue part with authority, but still it is to be done, and Miss Florence, if she is wise, will try to do it. I smiled at the spectacle of Miss Isabelle Urquhart in bicycle costume. I wish that Mrs. Charlotte Smith could see her. Miss Urquhart's dramatic abilities may have grown rusty, but her physical proportions are as fresh and salient as they were in her comic opera days. In spite of which I'm rather fond of this young woman. She is dominant, even when she has little to do, and she is always amusing. Miss Annie Clark is an actress of whom we should be pleased to rob Boston. The role of Mme. Rousseau could not have been more felicitously played. The weeping episode was so capitally done that it startled the audience.

That revival of the scenes from the "Long Strike" was a happy one. Go and see Stoddart while there is still time. He is the old school with all the modern improvements. His Moneypenny was new to me, and I felt a sense of disgrace when I realized that fact. And almost equally praiseworthy was the Jane Learoyd of Mary Hampton. Miss Hampton, in the library scene, gave us a subdued sketch that would not have come amiss from Duse.

* * *

I wonder how "The Geisha" will fare at Daly's Wednesday night. I've been thumping out its melodies on a long-suffering piano ever since I saw it at Daly's Theatre, London, and my neighbors have sent in all sorts of complaints. I don't know whether this dissatisfaction is due to Sidney Jones's music or to my interpretation of the same. At any rate, I've had more fun out of my "Geisha" score than I got from the "Gaiety Girl," "The Shop Girl" or "An Artist's Model." You see, I carried away souvenirs of Marie Tempest, Letty Lind, Juliet Nesville and a picked cast. How "The Geisha" will fare without these artists it is quite impossible to foresee.

Pronounce it "Gay-sha" if you please. I've heard it called "Gee-sha" and "Gi-sha," and even "Gesher-Girl." The good songs fall mostly to the lot of Letty Lind. The substitute here will be Miss Violet Lloyd, who—according to an English paper before me at this moment—has been "scoring heavily" in London during Miss Lind's absence from the cast. "The Interfering Parrot" and "The Monkey on a Stick" are delicious absurdities.

The role of the Chinaman—badly played in London—should be popular now that we are recovering from Li Hung Changomania. I thought it very silly when I saw it in England, but perhaps it has been rearranged for this country. Wun Hi is the name of "The Geisha's" Celestial, and his song has this refrain:

Chin, chin, Chinaman,
Muchee, muchee sad;
Me afraid
Allo trade
Wellie, wellie bad!
Wooe joke
Brokee, broke.
Makee shuttee shop;
Chin, chin, Chinaman,
Chop, chop, chop!

Can Miss Dorothy Morton sing "The Amorous Goldfish? Miss Tempest rendered this ditty with exquisite effect, and her substitute will have hard work. The American production, however, will be interesting. I feel quite worked up about it. In London "The Geisha" was so successful that at the matinees you saw people waiting for three or four hours in line to buy tickets, and George Edwardes's profits amounted to something like $5,000 a week.

* * *

The Chevalier company, at the Garrick to-morrow night, should prove interesting. Good Old Dutch will give us his old successes and a number of new ones, and he will be "assisted" by some bright people. Among these I must mention Miss Jessie Pickins Abbott and Miss Bessie Pickins Abbott, upon whom the Prince of Wales is said (said by Miss Jessie Pickins Abbott and Miss Bessie Pickins Abbott) to have smiled, and to whom, it is alleged (alleged by Miss Jessie Pickins Abbott and Miss Bessie Pickins Abbott), he chatted for one long half-hour. Then Li Hung Chang wrote in their autograph books when they came back on the St. Louis. Thrice lucky girls! Oh, favored Abbotts! Oh, fortunate Bessie and Jessie!

ALAN DALE.

THREE NEW "LEADING LADIES."

ENGLISH ACTORS ARE RICH

Many of Them Have Large Fortunes Much Oftener Than Is the Case with Americans.

The English actor of note is the richest man of his profession in the world. His American brother is not in his class when it comes to dollars and cents, or pounds and shillings. England's richest actor is Bancroft, the tragedian, who is easily worth $2,000,000. He is the owner of the Haymarket Theatre in London, and scorns the idea of playing to the public again.

Sir Henry Irving gives away thousands of dollars every year to less fortunate brothers and sisters on the stage. Unfortunate actors have not a better or more willing friend—Wilson Barrett, perhaps, excepted—than Irving. Were it not for this fact he would probably be the richest English actor. His productions, even costing, as they frequently do, as much as $100,000 to stage, have scarcely ever proved financial failures, while his tours in this country, where he is more popular than in England, have brought him enormous sums of clear profit. His first two tours here cleared for him a sum above $450,000, and his last trip is said to have increased his banking account to the tune of $300,000.

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal have also made large fortunes here, where they have always met with greater success than at home. By two trips taken in 1889 and 1890 they cleared $600,000, which they have increased considerably by "doing the provinces" in England.

J. L. Toole, in spite of his popularity in London, has never made any very big sums out of his metropolitan productions. In Australia and in the provinces, where he is even more appreciated than in London, he has had great financial prosperity. His Australian tour six years ago put $85,000 into his pocket, and his fortune is now said to exceed $300,000.

George Conquest, whose right name is Oliver, inherited from his father $350,000, which he is said to have doubled during the many years he has run the Surrey Theatre in London, with such conspicuous success. His yearly pantomimes, although costing enormous sums to produce, have always added largely to his bank account.

Mrs. Sara Lane is probably the richest English woman in "the profession." Her productions at the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, England, have met with successes only equalled by her own enormous popularity at this seat of blood-and-thunder drama. Her theatre, which is nightly crammed from floor to roof by most enthusiastic audiences, only holds $500, but in fifty-two years she has, by careful management and judicious catering, succeeded in accumulating a fortune of more than $800,000.

Charles Wyndham has made a considerable fortune since he first took the Criterion Theatre in London, eleven years ago. His productions have always been more or less successful, and the exhibition of a board announcing "House full" outside the coziest theatre in London is an almost nightly occurrence, which, coupled with the fact that the Criterion holds $1,000, speaks well for the financial position of the actor.

Mr. Tree is another actor who has been enormously successful, but the exact amount of his fortune is not known. It is, however, freely acknowledged to be very large. The fact that he has cleared sufficient out of "Trilby" to defray the expenses of building a theatre for himself, opposite the scene of most of his successes, speaks volumes.

That W. S. Penley has made a fortune out of "Charley's Aunt" goes without saying; indeed, if reports are to be believed the amount of the fortune exceeds $1,000,000.

THE MOST POPULAR SONG.

"Go Back to the Little One, Jim" Is Proving Very Attractive to New Yorkers.

There is a tragedy, a love story, an object lesson and a moral—all in one, and the whole set to music—that New Yorkers are listening to every night. It is the song "Go Back to the Little One, Jim," by Reginald M. Tewksbury, that Miss Caroline Hull is singing at the Madison Square Roof Garden. The publisher, Richard M. Truax, thinks it is the best song of the year.

The thousands who read the Easter number of the Journal will remember the story of the woman, the man and the "little girl" whose heart was torn by the man's conduct. It is the story of a woman whom the world frowns on, but who was so much of a woman that she sent the man back to the "little girl" he had promised to marry, even though she loved him herself.

Pathos—real pathos—set to music is always attractive. That may be the reason why the song, for which the Journal suggested the theme, is so popular.